

oh, there you are (I've been looking for you forever) by tangledintime

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Summary:

Sometimes, he feels a little silly, reading to her.

But then he'd look up and see her face, eyes widened with interest and curiosity and he suddenly he wants to read to her every night.

In which El gets a chance, Hopper schemes, and Mike is tricked.

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Author's Note:

My babies who I love so much. This made me kind of want to do a high school tutorial for mileven. Thoughts?

Hopper gives him a chance.

It's a small victory, but it's a victory nonetheless when he's told he can visit Eleven once a week. It's been nearly six months since she closed the gate, and five since she went to the Snowball with him, and he was starting to get a little antsy. Hopper dreaded the hours after three fifteen when Mike would appear, asking about her. If she was alright, if she was lonely, if she wanted the boys to come over.

Hopper wasn't stupid, he knew what "the boys" meant.

He would've said no if only for Eleven pouncing on his ass too. When could she go see Mike, was he okay, did he not want to see her. Sometimes, Hopper would forget she was just a teenage girl, and teenage girls never *shut up*.

So eventually, comprising with the girl(dish washing on her part, her least favourite chore, no powers involved), he allowed Mike to come to the cabin. He's told to come on a Tuesday one week, a Friday on the next. He's given a series of random days and random routes to get there to throw off anyone who would want to find El. He's told to bring his favourite books, and maybe some of Nancy's if she'll allow it, which he does.

He's got board games, puzzles, and the books. As he knocks the secret knock, he ponders if maybe he's trying too hard.

Hopper answers, ushering him in. "Jesus, kid, did you bring your entire toy box?"

He wants to tell him to shove it, but decides against it. One wrong move and he's out the door with no goodbyes and no way of getting

back in. So, all he does is set the stuff down on the coffee table. "Is El here?"

"Yeah, she's in her room." Mike nods, and for a moment there's silence before Hopper remembers to do the dad thing and point at him. "Do not go in!"

He wasn't planning on it, and he feels weird that Hopper thinks he would. He's not that kind of guy, and anyway, El would knock him into next week if he did.

Speaking of, she appears moments later, wearing a pair of overalls and a grey top, sliding on her sock as she beams up at him. "Hey," he breathes as she wraps her arms around him, "it's good to see you."

God, does he mean it. This time last year he was in the blanket fort, crying into his walkie talkie, on a dead channel, one hundred percent convinced he was talking to a dead girl. Now, she is here, she is real, and she is certainly not dead. He resists the urge to cup her face, to show her how much she means to him, but she's got him beat. She places her hands on his jaws and looks right into his eyes. "Mike." She whispers. "I've missed you."

Five months. She'd been gone for another five months, but now that he knows where she is, it hurts far less. "I've missed you too."

"Yeah, alright Romeo and Juliet, break it up." Hopper interrupts, sending Mike five feet into the air. "None of that funny business when I'm here."

El frowns. " 'S not funny."

His saying is missed completely, but he doesn't even take heed of it. Mike brings her back to him with a little jump of excitement. "I brought games! I can teach you how to play checkers, and I brought my Rubik's cube, I suck at it, but we can try and solve it together."

Hopper laughs a mirthless laugh. "Yeah, heh, about that. Remember those books I told you to get?" Mike nods slowly, then looks down to the small stack of books he brought. "Maybe start with those."

"Why?" both teens ask together.

"Because you are gonna teach her how to read." the two don't respond, just frown even deeper at him. "What, you think you were just gonna stay here for a few hours Scott free. No, kid, you gotta work for it."

El has her hands on her hips. "But I can read."

"So if I gave you one of those books you could read it all, and know most of the words?" She shifts a bit, then shakes her head. "It's not like I want to do this, but I can't keep you uneducated and I don't want him sniffing around the station anymore. So, I came up with a plan."

"I'm her tutor, then?" somehow, he doesn't like the sound of that.

"Every week, you come over, and you teach her to read, do math, all kind of school shit and maybe, just maybe, I'll consider enrolling her into school next year."

He does like the sound of that however, as he lights up. El does too, giving out a high pitched, "Really?"

"Seriously, chief? You're not just screwing with us, right?"

"I said maybe kid, maybe."

El turns back to Mike. "Maybe's good."

"Maybe's very good." She lets out a delighted giggle before running into her room again. Mike looks at Hopper, who's smiling, but just barely. Suddenly, Mike feels a little bit bad for throwing a tantrum at him for keeping El away.

Only a little bit. He still thinks he's an ass for doing that.

Mike gives him a half smile for his troubles. "Thank you, sir."

"Yeah, yeah." He dismisses, but Mike can tell he appreciates it. Eleven bursts into the living room with her hands full of notepads and different coloured pencils, dumping them all on the coffee table.

The session starts with math, mostly because Mike wants to look

smart in front of Hopper so he doesn't think all of this was a waste of time. He starts with addition and subtraction, and tries to use the easiest explanations that usually end up with how many Eggo's she has left. All the while, Hopper hovers like a distressed mother, constantly leaning over the table, looking at their work as if he hasn't been watching them for the past twenty minutes.

But a miracle presents itself when Hopper gets a call on his police scanner about some lady at the station needing help controlling her out of control neighbour and he has to leave. "When I come back there better be some progress made, or you can forget about these sessions."

After the door closes, Mike waits an appropriate amount of time before he asks. "Do you want to continue?" if she wants to learn, then he'll happily teach, as long as he's with her, they could be watching paint dry and he would be happy.

For a moment, she contemplates, before biting her lip and shaking her head. "Not math."

"Okay, uh, I think I have some biology notes written somewhere—"

"Not science."

"Okay," he says again, feeling stuck now. "What do you want me to teach you."

"Reading."

He nods, reaching over for the stack of books. "Yeah, totally, we can do that." he scours through the titles he's brought. "No, no, no. Definitely not."

An authors name catches her eyes and she stops him. "He looks fun."

"Stephen King, no, not today." He moves to throw the book down but she stops him.

"Why not?"

"Because I'd like you to get a good night sleep tonight. This stuff

would give the Demogorgon the creeps." her eyes widen before she nods, letting him put the book down. They skim through a few more before she stops him again. "Fairytale?" She sounds out.

"I got this one from my mom, she reads it to Holly sometimes when she's had a bad dream. It's kind of girly, I thought you might like it. It's got princesses, and witches, and princes. You wanna read this one?"

"Yes." She states, smiling softly, eyes innocent and full of wonder.

He opens the book and asks her to pick the one she wants to read first. Funnily enough, she picks Rapunzel, the story about a girl locked in a tower, with an evil witch keeping her there. Now, Hopper is in no way a witch, but the connection is still there in Mike's mind. They settle in taking turns, one page he will read, the next she will, and so on. It's an oddly paced process. He'd take his time reading, letting her ask about different words and what they mean, but when she read, it was a lot slower than he thought. Not that he was mocking her in anyway, or complaining, he just didn't realise how slow she was. Finger pressed to the page, sounding out words nearly every second line. Mike helped her every chance he got, but it was beginning to truly feel like he was teaching Holly to read.

Sometimes, he feels a little silly, reading to her.

But then he'd look up and see her face, eyes widened with interest and curiosity and he suddenly he wants to read to her every night. Not just once a week, every day, until she's learnt every word in the English language and she's smarter than him(which wouldn't be a tough task, El is awesome). As he's looking up, suddenly, something that Dustin said about Lucas and Max comes to the forefront in his mind.

"There's electricity, Mike, can't you feel it?"

At the time, he hadn't, because he wasn't the one supposed to be feeling it, but now he does. Every time El speaks, or brushes up against him, his hands would twitch for hers, his heart would speed up. This is the electricity Dustin was talking about, and it becomes a stark realisation.

He is in love with El.

Okay, it may not be a realisation to some(try: no one. Mike would come to realise everyone and their mother knew before he did), and he may have only known her for a little under six months, but he just knows. That year without her, it felt like something was missing inside him, like a hole in his heart. Now, she is back, he feels whole again, like everything's fine. God, he's only fourteen and he's in love. He could already hear the boys shrieking laughter.

"Mike?" Her soft voice brings him back to the present.

"Hmm?"

"It's your turn to re-mmph!" The word dies on her lips for a split second as he presses his lips to hers. It's brief, like all their kisses, but it leaves him lightheaded and fuzzy. El blinks at him, before smiling again. "What was that for?"

"I just...It's for doing so well with the reading." Jeez, Wheeler, what a save.

"Oh." She says, if a little deflated. "Can you do it again?"

He's stunned for a moment before she's leaning in again. This kiss lasts a tiny bit longer, and it's enough to send his mind reeling.

He leaves that night and walks to Nancy's car, parked out of sight where no one could guess where she was going. "How was it?" she asks.

"I lied." He blurts. "About not liking El."

Nancy smirks, before starting the car again.

Thank god, he finally realised it.